

Message Text

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TO USMISSION IAEA VIENNA PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 108271

FOLLOWING REPEAT LONDON 6282 ACTION SECSTATE INFO TEHRAN
HONG KONG TOKYO CANBERRA CAPE TOWN BRASILIA TEL AVIV OTTAWA
ROME BONN BUENOS AIRES MOSCOW PARIS TAIPEI PEKING GENEVA 20
MAY

QUOTE

S E C R E T LONDON 6282

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH, IN

SUBJECT: BRITISH REACTION TO INDIAN NUCLEAR TESTING

REF: STATE 104647

SUMMARY: BRITISH PRESS REACTION IS MIXED. GOVERNMENT
CAN BE EXPECTED OEPLORING INDIAN MOVE BUT SEE NO WAY TO
REVERSE IT. HMG LIKELY TO PUSH DISARMAMENT ISSUES MORE
URGENTLY BUT SHY AWAY FROM MEASURES TO SHOW DISPLEASURE
TOWARD (FRIENDLY, COMMONWEALTH) INDIA. BRITISH NUCLEAR
INTENTIONS WILL NOT BE AFFECTED EITHER BY INDIAN MOVE OR
BY U.S. REACTION TO IT. MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR BRITISH
LIKELY TO BE RENEWED IMPETUS GIVEN PAKISTANI ARMS RE-
QUESTS. EXTENT TO WHICH BRITISH WILL RESPOND TO ANY NEW
PAKISTANI REQUESTS NOT YET CLEAR BUT WOULD DEPEND IN
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PART ON HOW USG RESPONDED TO THEM. END SUMMARY.

1. IN REPLY TO REFTEL QUESTION (A), BRITISH PRESS REACTION MAY 20 IS MIXED. IT RANGES FROM STRONG CONDEMNATION BY LEFTISH GUARDIAN EDITORIAL (WHICH POINTS OUT INDIA ALREADY HAS THREE WORKING INSTALLATIONS FOR ITS PEACEFUL NUCLEAR NEEDS) TO SUGGESTION IN CONSERVATIVE DAILY TELEGRAPH THAT INDIA'S PEACEFUL INSTINCTS ARE SO FIRM THEY WILL WITHSTAND POSSESSION OF NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS, WHILE INDIAN NUCLEAR CAPABILITY WILL LESSEN INDIA'S FEAR OF CHINA AND DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET UNION AS WELL. MIDWAY BETWEEN IS EDITORIAL IN TIMES WHICH SUGGESTS INDIA REALLY NEEDS FOOD MORE THAN WORLD INFLUENCE AND REGRETS THAT MOVE BRINGS FORWARD MOMENT WHEN OTHER COUNTRIES LIKELY TO JOIN NUCLEAR CLUB. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EMPHASIS ON PAKISTAN'S FEARS AND ITS PROBABLE ABILITY ALSO TO GO NUCLEAR.

2. BRITISH GOVERNMENT CAN BE EXPECTED TO DEPLORE DEVELOPMENT BUT NOT SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REVERSE IT. (FCO NOON BRIEFER DECLINED COMMENT ON PRESS QUERY MAY 20). IMPORTANT TO NOTE TWO CONFLICTING POLICIES FROM HMG POINT OF VIEW: ONE IS LABOR GOVERNMENT'S STRONGER COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL DISARMAMENT THAN THAT OF ITS TORY PREDECESSOR'S; SECOND IS HMG'S ACCEPTANCE, UNDER ANY GOVERNMENT, OF NEED TO KEEP INDIA'S FRIENDSHIP. THUS HMG LIKELY TO THINK MORE OF LIMITING DAMAGE IN TERMS OF NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY THAN OF TRYING TO MAKE ANY POINTS DIRECTLY TO INDIANS.

3. CONSEQUENTLY (IN REPLY TO QUESTION B), BRITISH ARE UNLIKELY TO TAKE SERIOUS MEASURES TO MANIFEST DISPLEASURE AGAINST INDIA.

4. BY SAME TOKEN (IN REPLY TO QUESTION C), INDIAN TEST IS NOT LIKELY TO AFFECT UK'S OWN NUCLEAR CAPACITY, OR OVERALL REVIEW OF UK MILITARY STANCE PRESENTLY UNDER WAY. INDIAN EXAMPLE MIGHT ARGUE FOR MORE URGENT ATTENTION TO NPT CONSIDERATIONS, AS WELL AS WORLD DISARMAMENT QUESTIONS, AND THUS STRENGTHEN THOSE IN PRESENT BRITISH

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GOVERNMENT WHO WISH TO PUT HIGHER PRIORITY ON SUCH QUESTIONS. IN LONG RUN, HOWEVER, BRITISH WILL BE CAREFUL NOT TO PURSUE NPT AND DISARMAMENT GOALS IN WAYS THAT MIGHT GIVE OBJECTIVE CAUSE FOR OFFENSE TO INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

5. IN REPLY TO REFTEL QUESTION D, ATTITUDE USG TAKES TOWARD INDIA IS FOR OBVIOUS REASONS IRRELEVANT TO UK'S OWN NUCLEAR INTENTIONS.

6. MAIN PROBLEM FOR HMG IS LIKELY TO CENTER AROUND RE-
NEWED IMPETUS INDIAN NUCLEAR TESTING GIVES TO PAKISTANI
REQUESTS FOR MORE SOPHISTICATED ARMAMENTS. SUCH REQUESTS
ARE LIKELY TO SURFACE BOTH IN CENTO FORUM AND BILATER-
ALLY. WE SUSPECT BRITISH WILL FEEL LESS JUSTIFIED IN
CONTINUING TO REFUSE PAKISTANI DESIRE FOR ARMS - IF
PAKISTANIS ARE ABLE TO PAY FOR THEM. HOW FAR BRITISH
WILL RISK INCURRING INDIAN WRATH ALONG THIS LINE IS MOOT
POINT. WOULD BRITISH, FOR EXAMPLE, CONSIDER SELLING
THEIR MOST SOPHISTICATED AIRCRAFT TO PAKISTAN IF LATTER
REQUESTED THEM? WE SUSPECT BRITISH WOULD NOT GO THAT
FAR -- BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO BE SURE. WHAT USG DOES
IN RESPONSE TO MORE URGENT PAKISTANI ARMS REQUESTS WILL
NO DOUBT BE A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR.

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